



# VETERANS' UPDATE

FROM THE OFFICE OF CONGRESSWOMAN LYNN RIVERS

November 1999

## CONGRESSIONAL REPORT

### H.RES.41: Honoring American Military Women For Their Service in World War II Resolution

Congresswoman Lynn Rivers cosponsored this resolution on October 19, 1999. The resolution honors the women who served the United States in military capacities during World War II. It commends these women who, through sense of duty and willingness to defy stereotypes and political pressures, performed military assignments so that men could be freed for combat duties. It recognizes that these women, by serving with diligence and merit, not only opened up opportunities for women that had been reserved to men, but also contributed vitally to the victory of the United States and the Allies in World War II.

### H.J.RES.65

This joint resolution commends the veterans of service in the United States Army who fought and who gave their lives during World War II at the Battle of the Bulge. Furthermore, it authorizes the President to issue a proclamation calling upon the American people to honor the veterans of the Battle of the Bulge with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities. Lynn Rivers voted yes on this resolution, which passed in a unanimous vote on October 5, 1999; it is currently being considered in the Senate.

## THE ORIGINS OF VETERANS DAY

In 1921, an unknown World War I American soldier was buried in Arlington National Cemetery. This site, on a hillside overlooking the Potomac River and the city of Washington, became the focal point of reverence for America's veterans.

Similar ceremonies occurred earlier in England and France, where an unknown soldier was buried in each nation's highest place of honor (in England, Westminster Abbey; in France, the Arc de Triomphe). These memorial gestures all took place on November 11, giving universal recognition to the celebrated ending of World War I fighting at 11 a.m., November 11, 1918 (the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month). The day became known as "Armistice Day."

Armistice Day officially received its name in America in 1926 through a Congressional resolution. It became a national holiday 12 years later by similar Congressional action. If the idealistic hope had been realized that World War I was "the War to end all wars," November 11 might still be called Armistice Day. But only a few years after the holiday was proclaimed, war broke out in Europe. Sixteen and one-half million Americans took part. Four hundred seven thousand of them died in service, more than 292,000 in battle.

### *Armistice Day Changed To Honor All Veterans*

An answer to the question of how to pay tribute to those who had served in this latest, great war came in a proposal made by Representative Edwin K. Rees of Kansas: Change Armistice Day to Veterans Day, and make it an occasion to honor those who have served America in all wars. In 1954 President Eisenhower signed a bill proclaiming November 11 as Veterans Day.

On Memorial Day 1958, two more unidentified American war dead were brought from overseas and interred in the plaza beside the unknown soldier of World War I. One was killed in World War II, the other in the Korean War. In 1973, a law passed providing interment of an unknown American from the (continued on next page...) ►►

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## **CALLING ALL KOREAN WAR VETERANS....**

The 50th anniversaries of the Korea War will begin on June 25, 2000, and continue through July 27, 2003. In preparation for commemorative ceremonies that will be held here in the United States and abroad, Korean War veterans are being encouraged to register with the U.S.-Korea 2000 Foundation.

According to Veterans' Administration statistics, less than 20 percent of Korean War veterans belong to any national veteran's service organization. The Foundation seeks to identify and locate surviving Korean War veterans so that they might inform them of and, to the extent possible, facilitate their participation in 50th anniversary commemorative activities. Retired Marine General Raymond G. Davis, a former Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps, Korean War Medal of Honor recipient, and Foundation Co-chairman said, "We do not seek to commemorate the war, but rather the veterans thereof and the sacrifices they made to preserve democracy on the Korean peninsula almost 50 years ago."

Anyone who served in the armed forces, including the Coast Guard and Merchant Marine, may request an information and registration packet by contacting the Foundation at the address given below. Please include your name and complete mailing address. Family members of deceased Korean War veterans are also encouraged to participate.

U.S.-Korea 2000 Foundation, Inc.  
4600 Duke Street, Suite 416  
Alexandria, VA 22304-2517  
Phone: (703) 212-8128  
Fax: (703) 684-0193  
E-mail: [Info@USKorea2000.org](mailto:Info@USKorea2000.org)  
Internet: <http://www.uskorea2000.org>

The U.S.-Korea 2000 Foundation is a private, publicly-supported, non-profit organization, that serves the Korean War veteran community through individual and corporate philanthropic outreach.



(Veterans' Day continued...) Vietnam War, but none was found for several years. In 1984, an unknown serviceman from that conflict was placed alongside the others. To honor these men, symbolic of all Americans who gave their lives in all wars, an Army honor guard, The 3rd U.S. Infantry (The Old Guard), keeps day and night vigil.

A law passed in 1968 changed the national commemoration of Veterans Day to the fourth Monday in October. It soon became apparent, however, that November 11 was a date of historic significance to many Americans. Therefore, in 1978 Congress returned the observance to its traditional date.

### *National Ceremonies Held at Arlington*

The focal point for official, national ceremonies for Veterans Day continues to be the memorial amphitheater built around the Tomb of the Unknowns. At 11 a.m. on November 11, a combined color guard representing all military services executes "Present Arms" at the tomb. The nation's tribute to its war dead is symbolized by the laying of a presidential wreath. The bugler plays "taps." The rest of the ceremony takes place in the amphitheater.

Veterans Day ceremonies at Arlington and elsewhere are coordinated by the President's Veterans Day National Committee. Chaired by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, the committee represents national veterans organizations.

Governors of states and U.S. territories appoint Veterans Day chairpersons who, in cooperation with the National Committee and the Department of Defense, arrange and promote local ceremonies.

# DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE MOVES AHEAD ON DIGITAL DOG TAGS

American Forces Press Services

In the future, service members may wear two kinds of dog tags instead of one -- the traditional metal ID tags and a new plastic tag bearing digitized medical information.

Defense officials are considering using Personal Information Carriers, known as PICs. Similar to the plastic memory cards used to store pictures taken with digital cameras, the PIC holds a service member's shot record and data on allergies and surgical history.

While the metal tags would continue to serve as the primary means of identification on the battlefield, the PIC would give field medical personnel access to service members' medical records. It could be read by laptop computers at battalion aid stations.

The military first issued each service member an aluminum dog tag in 1906. During World War I, mindful of the realities of war deaths, the military began issuing two tags, one to be interred with the body, the second to be turned over to personnel to record the death.

The Department of Defense (DoD) recently awarded Informatec, Inc., a contract to produce an initial order of 5,000 to 20,000 digital tags, which will be demonstrated in simulated operational environments in the next few months. The contract includes options for a total of 2.5 million tags over the next five years, according to Lt. Col. Bradley Dawkins, an Air Force physician and DoD's PIC project manager.

DoD has not yet decided to employ the high capacity PIC, however. Dawkins said the department is also developing digital Smart Cards to carry an individual's security key and other information. Officials are studying whether the cards could also carry medical information, Dawkins said.

If the department fields the PIC, the initial versions will hold only text-based data, Dawkins noted. Eventually, as data capacity increases and costs per device decreases, they also may hold X-rays, EKG and MRI results and other multimedia data, he said.

The PIC is part of the Composite Health Care System II (CHCS II), a computerized system designed to allow providers to track health care services delivered to members of the military's health care beneficiary community.

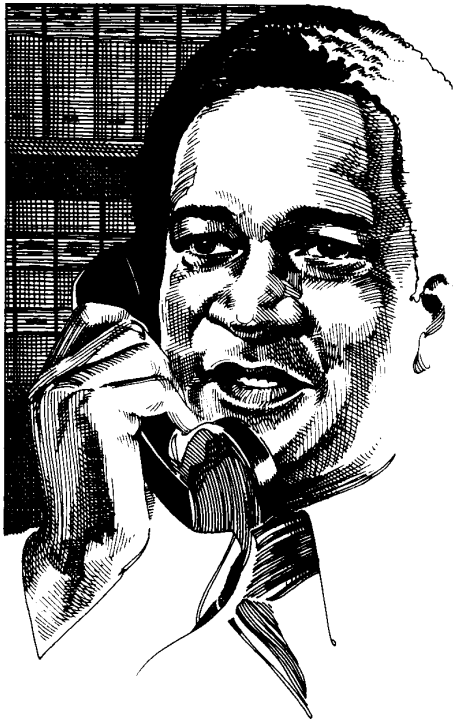
The PIC would be an electronic theater medical record in settings where computer network connectivity is unavailable. Thus, the PICs would give in-theater health care providers immediate access to accurate clinical information and would allow them to update service members' permanent records in the field.

The PICs are a result of lessons learned following the Gulf War, Dawkins explained. Defense officials found medical services performed in the field did not always reach service members' permanent paper medical records. A 1998 presidential report on Gulf War illness directed the department to develop a force health protection program and maintain consistent, continuous records, he said.

Researching Gulf War illness using paper-based medical records proved difficult, Dawkins added. Digital information, he said, lends itself more readily to statistical analysis.

## WHO ARE TODAY'S VETERANS?

There were about 25.2 million veterans as of July 1, 1998, of whom 19.3 million had served during at least one period defined as wartime. The number of veterans is declining, and their average age increasing. The median age of veterans was 57.7 years; 36% were over 65 years of age; about 4.6% were female. The VA projects a decline of about 26% in the number of veterans between 1990 and 2010, down from one of four men in 1994 to one of eight in 2010, half of whom will be over age 62. *Source: CRS Brief*



## VA Establishes EFT Information Hotline

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has a new toll-free telephone number for those seeking information about the Department's Direct Deposit/Electronic Funds Transfer (DD/EFT) initiative.

By dialing **1-877-838-2778**, veterans, dependents and financial institutions can receive information about electronic funds transfer. A DD/EFT phone unit has been set up at the VA Regional Office here to provide better customer service to those inquiring about this program, or wanting to enroll or change their direct deposit.

The helpline's hours of operation are Monday through Friday, from 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Central Standard Time.

Veterans and dependents seeking information on all other VA benefits programs can call the department's general toll-free number, **1-800-827-1000**, which will connect them to the nearest VA regional office.

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*November 10, 1999 marked the 224th year of the United States Marine Corps. I offer my warmest regards on this occasion and a hearty thank you to all who have been a part of the Marines.*

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**M.C.**